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Handling Library of Congress card orders.

HANDLING LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CARD ORDERS IN THE AVERAGE LIBRARY

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By "average library" is meant, for the purposes of this paper, a library the scope of whose resources and activities is general, one which is not called on to modify its internal practices by reason of its prominence or affiliations, and one in which there is a separate department or person devoted to cataloging work.

The proportion of Library of Congress work in such an institution depends on several things, chiefly on the closeness of the kindred relation of the library's stock in trade with that of the Congressional Library, but also on the local policy in regard to form of headings, card alteration, analytical work, availability of certain reference tools, and so on. But whatever the amount of this work, the methods of handling its routine need not greatly vary, and doubtless there is not a great difference between the practices of libraries in this respect. It is mainly a matter of common sense, a growth in each institution according to immediate requirements. One notes the L. C. order number, adds the number of cards wanted, and sends to Washington—or lacking the order number, sends author, title, and imprint—keeps some record of these card orders, receives the cards, adds headings and call numbers, does some checking and counting, and the thing is done. But there is a little more to it than that, as any person doing the work, even in a moderate sized library, will learn; and as there are at least two ways of doing everything, it cannot be amiss to record a method that has worked well.

At some point in the process the book is classified and subject headed. This may be done after the cards are received, under two conditions, either if the cards are ordered simultaneously with the ordering of the book, or if the book has come, but can wait around until the cards come. One of these conditions will be immediately discussed; of the other it is sufficient to re-

mark that the book ought never to wait around—unless it were bought for that purpose.

ADVANCE ORDERS

When a book order is sent off the catalog department is apprised of the fact by receiving the order department's record of the same. Immediately a cataloger seeks preliminary information requisite to the entering, classifying, subject heading, and card ordering for these books. The L. C. card information may be obtained from the Library of Congress catalog, or proof slips, or the *A. L. A. Book-list*, or the Cumulative book index, or the United States catalog, or the Catalogue of copyright entries, or the Monthly catalogue of United States public documents, or the Monthly list of state publications, or from some other source, but best of all from the L. C. catalog if it be available. Should there be little doubt about getting L. C. cards on which small alteration need be made, order for cards can be by author and title, and this is necessary where the L. C. order number cannot be obtained. But for the sake of economy the number will be used when possible. The title as found will be inspected, and cards will be ordered in the number probably needed, or by a fixed number according to the library's regular policy, or by formula through the method suggested in the Library of Congress Handbook of card distribution, 3d ed., 1914, pages 32-34. But should the book order be indefinite as regards edition, or information at hand show that the Library of Congress cataloged only a very old edition, or should cards be required immediately for a work not published in America and not within the Library of Congress scope of stock (see Handbook, 3d ed., pp. 5-10), cards must not be ordered, or should be ordered only with special instructions on the specific points in question, an awkward arrange-

ment not generally recommended. Yet if the Library of Congress catalog shows that contents are printed on their cards, a cast may be made in the dark for the sake of this great advantage, since typewriting contents is expensive and unsatisfactory work.

PRELIMINARY PROCESSES

When a book is received in the catalog department, reference is first made to a file that shows whether cards have been ordered previously and what needed information has been obtained from any source, especially from the catalog, shelf list, L. C. catalog or other source of Library of Congress practice or of name or number necessary for ordering cards (cf. above, under Advance orders). The nature of the file giving these particulars must depend on the size and internal convenience of the library; it may be the order department's file, or the L. C. order file to be mentioned hereafter in which printed cards and information slips are kept until needed, or it may perhaps be a third file containing also the notes for the preparation of written cards or with a checking system showing the distribution of books in process of classifying and cataloging. In a big department it would be a sort of key to all the work being undertaken. Whatever its nature, if this file shows that cards have been ordered, these will now be sought and if received will be compared with the book, and all further processes carried through. If cards have not come but order number is at hand or cards already ordered, proceedings will be as the case requires. If nothing is found in the key file, resort is next made in the customary manner to the catalog or shelf list and the source of L. C. information, and if this information be wanting for the particular book under treatment cards are ordered or not according to the probability of satisfactory results, on somewhat the same considerations as those stated above for advance orders, but with the book itself instead of the book order in hand. If cards are not obtainable, this fact is made evident to all concerned. Extreme division of labor may so modify this routine that books will come to catalogers without their knowing whether

printed cards can be obtained, but such condition is not advisable, owing to the great advantages furnished by knowledge of what the Library of Congress has done.

INFORMATION SLIPS

It is a great convenience to have the Library of Congress card (or proof slip), found in the L. C. catalog, brought to the cataloger in the book, or brought in the case of an advance order to the person responsible for decision upon the ordering of cards. Notes are made on the back of this card (or proof slip), or on a slip appended to it, and all such notes—which may be conveniently referred to as information slips—kept together during the few days pending the arrival of the printed cards. Where the L. C. catalog is public or the library staff large, no such card should be long extracted unless a dummy take its place in the file. When there is no chance to use a depository catalog in this way, because the library has not the use of one or is hampered in its use, the cataloger will be served with notes on what has been learned from the best available sources. It is, of course, perfectly obvious that the amount and kind of this predigested information that can be conveyed with any satisfaction to a cataloger or classifier by a second person is extremely limited. But it has been found in practice that a person experienced in preliminary search work can produce all that is necessary to enable a responsible cataloger to decide whether cards should be ordered or written, and in what way to be ordered, or if cards are not to be ordered to go ahead in most cases without personal reference to the catalog.

Both the book and the preliminary information notes being now in hand, the work is classified, subject headed, referred to the shelf list for its complete call number, and its cards ordered. The notes or information slips (one or more) finally accumulated with the book give in detail all alterations required for the face of the cards, such accession information as the department preserves, the classification and author notation, the subject heads, references, and additional headings, any special

cataloging instructions, and a tally of the cards needed for extra files. As stated above, these notes may where possible be made solely on the card from the L. C. catalog (under such safeguards as shall be necessary), but libraries will frequently have forms for checking or filling according to their peculiar needs. The final addition to the information slips is the total number of printed cards required, and then, the order being written for L. C., a check mark is immediately placed against the number of cards to confirm the ordering.

ORDERING CARDS—L. C. ORDER FILE

L. C. orders may be sent on sheets, but the better way is on standard manilla slips, unpunched, one to a title. These slips will be returned with the cards and will be useful not only as evidence but also to separate the sets of cards. The manner of ordering cards is sufficiently well known (see Handbook, 3d ed., Ordering cards, Methods of ordering, Number of cards, etc.). Most libraries can order the exact number of cards required in each case, even for advance orders, with the resultant economy, but when Library of Congress judgment is desired the formula may well be used (Handbook, pp. 32-34). A lot number is assigned for each package of orders sent, and this is put on the corner of the manilla order slip, after the name of the library. If letters are used for this lot number there can be no confusion with the number of cards asked for. All information slips are then placed in a tabbed envelope (described below), and the lot number written on its tab. This envelope, with contents, stays with the book while it is getting its book number added or confirmed by the shelf list, and getting its pocket and book-card, its "new books card," and any other temporary or permanent unprinted cards or instructions that may be required. Then the envelope and contents is removed, and the book passes along at once to its perforating, lettering, plating, pocket-pasting, labeling, etc.

The envelopes are filed alphabetically by authors in a box or tray (L. C. order file). Each envelope has an open top, with the

front cut down low enough to show the author's name on the slip enclosed, but the back nearly the height of the cards. The tab bearing the lot number is preferably on the side of the envelope, not the top, leaving the top of the file to the necessary alphabetical tabs of guide cards and to "tickle" or "follow-up" markers for delayed work. For this envelope nothing serves the purpose better than Gaylord's style G book-card pocket, with its flaps unpasted, the flaps making excellent tabs, left and right. The box in which these pockets come will do to hold the L. C. order file, one side being cut down to one inch to facilitate fingering the tabs.

Meanwhile, the lot of card orders is sent off, at convenience, under U. S. government frank; about fifty slips can be conveniently sent in an envelope, but the number in each lot is more properly determined by the time one can wait for cards. The Library of Congress will usually fill orders the day it receives them. Record is kept of the lots ordered, by lot number, date sent, number of sets ordered, date returned, number of orders filled, and sometimes number of Out, C, R, Oe, Np, errors, etc.

RECEIVING CARDS

When the Library of Congress cards are received, each set is accompanied by the manilla order slip bearing its number—assuming that L. C. orders are sent upon such slips. These sets are tallied with those charged for on the account slip received with the cards, and the account filed if correct. Order slips unaccompanied by cards and marked Out, C, R, Oe, Rc, P, Ci?, C?, Np, etc. (see Handbook, 3d ed., pp. 58-61), are for the moment put aside. Record is made of the date the lot is returned and the number of orders filled, with further details if found practically useful. Then the cards are alphabetized. The L. C. order file is consulted and all envelopes extracted whose tabs bear the same lot number as that which is on the manilla order slips. Since these are already in alphabetical order they should correspond with the cards that have been received and alphabetized.

DISTRIBUTING AND PREPARING

Place in three lots, side by side, the L. C. cards with their order slips, the unfilled order slips, and the envelopes containing information slips. Compare and unite the cards with the information in the envelopes and with the numbers on the manilla slips, set by set, cross off the manilla orders, and divide the united alphabet so far as necessary into eight parts, as follows:

(1) Cards and information correct and complete; ready for the typewriter.

(2) Face of cards to be altered on account of previous determination or present discovery that edition sent differs from book owned.

(3) More or different information needed for typewriter regarding headings, call numbers, etc.

(4) Cards whose corresponding information envelopes are missing.

(5) Information slips and cards for books that have not come.

(6) Information slips for cards that cannot be obtained (Np).

(7) Information slips for cards that are to come later (order slips checked Out, C, or R).

(8) Information slips for all other unfilled orders (i. e. for order slips checked Rd, Rdl, On, Oe, Rc, P, Ci?, C?, D). Also information slips corresponding to any orders where errors have been made in filing by the Library of Congress.

The best time to compare the cards received with the order slips and information slips is during this process of division and conjunction, and a glance at order number, author, title, imprint, suffices for the moment. Such comparison and sorting can be done very rapidly if all the suggestions outlined above have been followed to the letter, each set of cards being accompanied by its own order slip, either with number or else author, title, and imprint, and each information slip indicating all essentials for further work on the cards. The advantage of ordering on unpunched manilla slips now becomes evident when it is seen that sets of cards are clearly discriminated, and further, that they can be separated by running a pencil through the hole in the cards and drawing slightly forward.

The cards in the first division can be sent immediately to the person who is to typewrite their headings, those in the second division following them after being given to a responsible person to be altered according to direction on the information slips. Such alteration is obviously best accomplished when the card from the L. C. catalog is at hand and properly pencil-marked. The third and fourth lots of cards, if any, go to catalogers or classifiers who adjust any difficulties and complete the information notes, even having recourse again at this point, if necessary, to the book that is being cataloged. In case a book has not yet arrived, and cards were ordered in advance, as in the fifth division, the cards are put into the envelopes along with the information slips and placed in the L. C. order file to await the books. Information and order slips for cards that could not be obtained at all, or that, being delayed, were adjudged not best to wait for, must be sent to catalogers for the preparation of typewritten work; but those in the seventh and eighth divisions must be pronounced on by a person competent to decide whether cards ought to be awaited from L. C., or re-ordered, or typewritten—except in the case of wrong cards sent, when the order would be returned anyway with the card L. C. provides for the purpose (see Handbook, 3d ed., p. 52). If the cards are to be re-ordered, the order slips are marked "Hold till week——," and returned to the Library of Congress (see Handbook, pp. 54-63, where considerable detailed advice is given to card subscribers). The desirability of awaiting cards depends, of course, on local usage in several matters touching the particulars of card preparation and filing and use of the card catalog. It seems always desirable that a brief temporary card be made for the catalog under the name of the author in cases where printed cards are not to be had immediately.

Throughout the foregoing exposition it has been assumed that libraries using the process would do so in its entirety, with the possible variations indicated; but different methods from these are perfectly practicable, involving, however, changes in

routine or equipment that there has been no attempt to discuss here. Likewise, it is assumed here that experience will show those using Library of Congress cards how far they can profitably use them, to what extent advance orders pay, what verification of numbers and titles is necessary, what system of accounting is needed and how careful inspection of Library of Congress charges, what records are worth while, and how far the necessary details of the system can be made useful for the purposes of other printed work and typewritten work. Nothing has been said, moreover, about rules for cataloging, methods of card changing, use of subject headings and classification notation or other details given on Library of Congress cards, all topics outside the purpose of this paper. Several matters of interest to a few libraries only, to special libraries, to bibliographers rather than libraries, or to beginning subscribers, are not touched upon. The Handbook of card distribution enters upon some of these questions, and the Library of Congress is ever ready to extend its usefulness by answering inquiries according to need.

It is a pleasure to record the fact that the Library of Congress service proves very efficient in its many and minute details. Before closing the subject by a brief discussion of standing orders, it will be useful to look over a few figures on the results of everyday L. C. order work that show what good work is being done by the Library of Congress card section.

STATISTICAL RESULTS

Out of a lot of fifty orders sent, a typical result is this: Returned, 45 order slips with cards, and five without cards. Of the latter, three are checked Out, one Ci?, one Rc. Of the 45 sets of cards received, 23 are ready for typewriting, six are to be altered, five have questions as to headings, one seems to have no information slip corresponding, and ten are for books ordered but not yet received in the department.

A typical record of ordering for one year—an actual experience during 1915—shows that out of 1161 sets ordered there were only 78 cases where cards were not re-

ceived immediately. Most of these were Outs; there was but one Np (no prospect), and only five were errors. This record shows very discreet ordering and very careful filling of orders. These 78 cases were so cleared up that on Dec. 31 there were only 13 cases on hand of cards not received, and these were all Outs (cards out of print) on orders not over ten weeks old; in fact, eleven were not over four weeks old. Six of these Outs were disposed of by the arrival of cards on Jan. 3, 1916.

An examination of the L. C. order file on Dec. 31, 1915, showed 136 envelopes on hand. All but 13 of these contained L. C. cards for books not yet received. Out of the 123 such cases, the cards for 12 were ordered in 1913, for 26 in 1914, for 85 in 1915. Of the latter 85, 71 were ordered during the quarter October to December, being divided as follows: Oct., 5; Nov., 27; Dec., 39. A few of the older orders were probably for books that will never be received, and there is a small sum of money thrown away, but even then the cards can be returned to the Library of Congress and something reclaimed (see Handbook, 3d ed., pp. 52-53). A periodical as to the prospect of receiving the books weeding of the L. C. order file is necessary, inquiry being made of the order department in question.

STANDING ORDERS

Libraries which analyze a considerable number of series will find it worth while to file with the Library of Congress a standing order for cards for analytics for each of these series for which cards are printed. Bulletin 16-19 of the card section of the Library of Congress (3d ed., Mar. 1, 1914) gives a list of about 3500 series for which cards are in stock; it gives also the method of ordering by series (see also Handbook, 3d ed., pp. 45-46). The method need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that the number of cards called for depends on the library's treatment of the series in question, and is to be regulated somewhat as follows:

The greatest number of cards needed may be one for shelf list, one for author, one for title, one for filing under name

Gaylord Bros.
Makers
Syracuse N. Y.
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

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